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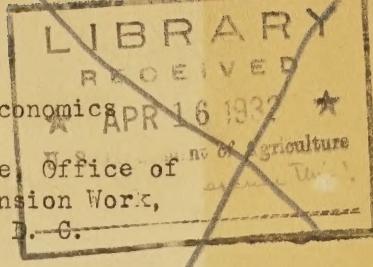
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CENTRAL STATES OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

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Adaptation of Outlook Information to the Individual Farm

I. Purpose of outlook work.

- A. To serve as a guide in the production and long-time marketing program of the individual farm.
 - 1. Outlook information to affect production or marketing of the group must first affect production and marketing of the individual.
 - 2. Outlook information should help to determine the kind and quantity of product and the time of putting it on the market.
 - 3. Other factors have an important influence on the production and marketing program of the individual farm. These include:
 - a. Characteristics of the farm:
 - (1) Climate. (5) Labor supply.
 - (2) Topography. (6) Improvements.
 - (3) Soil. (7) Equipment.
 - (4) Acreage in the farm.
 - b. Characteristics of farm operator:
 - (1) Knowledge and experience.
 - (2) Managerial capacity.
 - (3) Likes and dislikes.
 - (4) Physical strength and aggressiveness.
 - c. Market facilities:
 - (1) Kind of market.
 - (2) Distance to market.
 - (3) Transportation facilities and cost.

B. To serve as a guide in the short-time marketing of products already produced.

1. Press releases, market news, commodity situation reports, current economic leaflets, and outlook meetings must largely be relied upon for this purpose. Frequent releases throughout the year are essential.
2. It is suggested that marketing agencies such as cooperative organizations for the sale of specific commodities be relied upon for definite advice on short-time marketing plans.

II. Fitting outlook information to individual use.

- A. It is necessary to recognize the impracticability of temporarily closing down the farm plant and discharging the farm labor.
- B. When reduction in the production of individual commodities is suggested by prospective supply and demand conditions, alternative enterprises are necessary to the individual producer and should be suggested if the individual is to be expected to act on the suggestion to reduce his output on the particular product.
- C. Correct timing of shifts in production on individual farms is very important, and where either favorable or unfavorable market conditions are suggested, outlook information should be as definite as possible about the period of influence of the factors reported.
- D. It is desirable to study the competitive position of each State or smaller area in the production of specific commodities.
- E. Changes in the kind or size of enterprises as suggested by outlook information are likely to affect other enterprises than those to be changed. The effect of changing one enterprise on the efficiency of the entire business should be considered in recommending changes.
 1. Farm-account work offers the best means of knowing the effect of enterprise shifts on the efficiency of the entire business.
 2. Cost studies throw light on the variation of cost of production with different combinations and different sizes of enterprises.
- F. The financial credit available to the individual or group of producers is an important factor in the choice of enterprises.

III. Procedure in procuring advantageous use of outlook information by individual producers.

- A. Forms and data to be used by the individual in drawing up definite budgetary plans for production and marketing have been tried by several States. A and B are illustrative. These forms and data serve:
 1. To make individual thinking more efficient and specific.
 2. To coordinate the farm enterprises and make them more efficient.
 3. To furnish a means of selecting the most profitable combination of enterprises under the expected cost and price conditions.
- B. Comparative analyses may be made in such a way as to help the individual in choosing between alternative enterprises.
- C. Farm-accounting summaries or farm-business reports issued to farm-account cooperators may well combine long-time outlook material which bears on farm organization with the other facts influencing the organization of the farm. Farm-business reports are kept and studied by farmers because the reports have in them data applying to individual business. These reports therefore create more personal interest than do general reports.
- D. Personal contacts and letters between economic specialists or county agents and farm-account cooperators form an especially good channel for fitting outlook material to the individual farm. As farm-management

accounting increases, this means of communication is getting to be really important in the dissemination of outlook information, especially that information which deals with the long-time outlook. In the farm-account work there is an opportunity to bring to bear on the individual business all the factors that are important in determining the most advantageous program for production and marketing.

E. County or district economic conferences in which farmers take part by helping to formulate production and marketing policies in line with the long-time outlook, have been used with apparent success in many States. In so far as leading farmers really give their best thought to these conferences, they seem to have been effective in adapting outlook information to local farm conditions.

IV. Some results of the use of outlook information on individual farms.

A. Thirty-three farms in eastern North Dakota were enlisted in a 5-year economic study. Besides studying their fundamental organization and efficiency through accounts and other records, the operators of these farms are aided in keeping in touch with the agricultural outlook as reported at frequent intervals and may be expected to make greater use of this kind of information than the average farmer. In response to the cheap feed and crop outlook for 1931, these farms show the following changes as compared with 1930:

	<u>Per cent</u>
Increase in breeding cows - - - - -	14.8
Increase in breeding ewes - - - - -	4.6
Decrease in acres of feed crops per farm - - -	0.3
Decrease in acres of cash crops per farm - - -	1.5

B. The changes made by one very successful Illinois farmer who has a good basic or fundamental organization on his farm but who has made material adjustments to changing economic conditions are reflected in the following table. The data are taken from accounts kept by the farm operator. He has kept accounts in the Illinois farm-account project for seven years, and has earned an average of over 8 per cent on his investment for the entire period, including 1930. The land was inventoried the first year at \$250, but since then has been carried at \$200 an acre.

	1929		1930	
	Acres	Yield	Acres	Yield
Crops -				
Corn	80	56	70	45
Oats	40	53	40	59
Winter wheat	40	25	40	20
Hay (clover and timothy)	12	3	12	1.2
Pasture (bluegrass)	5	--	5	--
Pasture (clover)	18	--	28	--
Total area	200	--	200	--
Crop income.	---	\$2,725	---	\$859
Livestock -				
Horses.	6	\$ 125	4	---
Cattle (beef)	37	1,317	46	\$1,112
Brood sows.	12(hg)	3,692	15(hg)	3,344
Poultry	106	359	135	313
Dairy sales	---	665	---	468
Total livestock	---	6,160	---	5,237
Total income.	---	8,885	---	6,168
Total expense	---	1,784	---	1,216
Family labor.	---	770	---	740
Investment per acre	---	289	---	287
Rate earned	---	11.0%	---	7.3%
Earned per acre	---	28.48	---	17.95
Labor and management wage	---	3,983	---	1,881

This record shows a timely adjustment in numbers of livestock to a cheap feed outlook. Other adjustments which have been made on this farm are the putting of calves on the milking Shorthorn cows instead of selling butterfat, and adjusting the hay and pasture acreage to meet seasonal needs by the use of temporary fences.

Subcommittee on Adaptation of the Outlook
to the Individual Farm.

R. R. Hudelson, Chairman,
H. A. Berg,
R. Cole,
H. M. Dixon.

HOW OUTLOOK INFORMATION IS USED AND WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS
DESIRED BY FARMERS IN ILLINOIS

By
R. C. Ross

The real criterion of outlook work is the use made of the information by the farmers for whom it is prepared. In Illinois we have been interested to find in what ways farmers were using the information, and how its use could be improved. This has seemed a necessary step in developing a program of outlook work in the State. Thus far, two approaches have been made to this subject. Last spring, following the period during which outlook meetings were held in the various counties, a questionnaire was sent to the farm advisers of the State seeking information as to the number of outlook meetings

held, the attendance, the methods used, and the suggestions of the advisers as to how the whole program could be improved. This study furnished many valuable suggestions and led to a further study this fall at which time a questionnaire was sent out to 1,000 farmers of the State who had attended the 21 district outlook meetings put on by the college staff during last February. These men were farmers selected from the various counties as being likely to make the best use of the outlook. In addition to hearing the discussion at these meetings each of the men concerned was furnished with a copy of the outlook for Illinois put out by the college. Of the 1,000 farmers, 360 replied to the questionnaire. I shall try to bring together some of the high points gleaned from these replies.

Six questions were asked in this questionnaire regarding methods of handling outlook work. These questions follow:

1. What changes, if any, have you made in your farm operations as a result of outlook information?
2. Please check the parts of the district outlook meetings that have been of most value to you: Talks, charts, printed outlook reports, discussion by farmers.
3. Have you helped in holding local outlook meetings?
4. If so, what additional training or materials would be helpful to you in this work?
5. What percentage of farmers do you think studies future rather than present market and price conditions as a guide to what to produce and when to have it ready for market.
6. We would appreciate any other suggestions you may have regarding the kind of information given in the outlook or the methods of presentation.

The replies to these questions will be taken up in order. Of the farmers answering the questionnaire 247, or 67 per cent, recorded actual changes as taking place on their farms as a result of outlook information. A wide variety of changes were listed, some of the more frequent of which may be grouped as follows:

Twenty-nine increased hog production; 21 lowered cost of production; 20 reduced wheat acreage; 19 reduced wheat acreage and replaced it with legumes; 19 employed better marketing methods; 16 put less emphasis on grain and more on livestock; 15 increased the poultry enterprise; 13 grew more legumes; 10 increased pasture or hay crops; 7 culled poultry and livestock more closely than usual; 6 put added emphasis on rotations and soil building; 6 planned to feed all their grain on the farm; and 5 made changes in the amount of dairy production.

To quote a few of the individual replies made in answer to this question may be in order. It should be remembered in this connection, however, that although some of these replies appear at first to be contradictory, the conditions and location of the particular area of the State must be taken into account in appraising them. It is noteworthy that of the entire

number of replies received very few were out of line with the information set forth in the outlook for that particular part of the State.

A goodly number of these men saw in the outlook a need for adjusting many phases of farm business, as the following typical individual replies will indicate.

"Less oats, less wheat, more beans, more clover and hay land, more corn, and more dairy;" "have tried to produce more grain, eggs, and cream at less cost;" "less cattle, less sheep, less oats, more legumes, more hogs for the first 6 months of 1931;" "cut costs, provided plenty of pasture, raised canning crops with the price fixed in advance of planting;" "raised more hogs and chickens, planted more clover, and raised more soybean hay;" "less wheat sowed this fall, slowing down on hog production;" "cut clover for seed instead of hay. Planned acreage of small grains so as to use larger proportion for feed, increased hogs for fall marketing;" "cut down wheat acreage, raised more poultry, fed for more economical laying;" "feeding all small grains, not increasing fall pig crop, extending clover acreage;" "somewhat less wheat, more land to legumes;" "planted more soybeans, planning to winter more cattle;" "more poultry, attempted more alfalfa, 30 per cent more hogs but less next year;" "less hired help and at a cheaper wage, less wheat acreage, and try to raise more and better pork;" "increased acreage of alfalfa, raised more barley, increased numbers of livestock;" "less wheat acreage, more alfalfa and corn;" "sold corn early, increased hogs, quit wheat;" "more hogs, more chickens, feeding wheat, emphasis on soil building and crop rotations;" "raised more chicks, and hogs ready for market early; reduced wheat;" "discontinued wheat. General purpose tractor used, rented more land;" "less oats, more alfalfa, more soybeans, 20 acres of tomatoes and more milk cows;" "less oats, more pasture and livestock, marketing corn early in season, will not breed as many hogs in 1932;" "less wheat, more alfalfa, more hogs, less anticipation of better prices;" "cut down wheat, increased soybeans as a substitute for oats, keeping more pullets for winter laying;" "better seed, more sweetclover and alfalfa, more livestock;" "keeping more beef-type cows, raising more calves and alfalfa."

Other farmers applied the outlook particularly to certain enterprises on the farm. Illustrations of this kind follow:

"Produced less tomatoes for canning;" "raised as many chicks as possible because of favorable egg prices predicted this fall;" "raised fewer heifers;" "because of predicted large peach crops to be harvested north of me, did not nitrate my trees heavily and let the fruit be harvested sooner, which gave better prices;" "having a dairy farm I am feeding to hold my base up in the fall and produce more evenly;" "am milking more cows, will raise more calves for beef;" "increased my hogs, expect to decrease them in 1932;" "increased my poultry flock;" "buying sheep and cattle as prices are low;" "raising more hogs, feeding them 35-cent wheat;" "crowded spring pigs for early market;" "reduced wheat acreage from 33 acres last year to 13 this fall;" "keeping farm accounts with the university;" "cut down on horses, using more power machinery;" "weaning all calves, culled dairy herd more closely;" "cut down acreage of melons, planted later as suggested;" "cut down the size of dairy herd and sold heifer calves young rather than holding them for about 2 years before selling."

In the application of the outlook emphasis was placed upon a reduction of cash expenses and efficient production. These ideas were reflected by a number of men in the examples that follow.

"Tried to produce cheaper;" "not planning increase in production, trying to cut overhead with increased quality;" "reduced labor costs and let a lot of work go undone;" "cut out wheat, doing with less help, and have hunted another job to help support the farm;" "using big team hitches instead of a tractor;" "trying to do a more efficient job in the general farming set-up;" "have lowered cost of production, using horses as much as possible, doing more work myself;" "have cut down acreage to the place where I can operate it myself;" "more careful to eliminate unprofitable operations;" "watching overhead expense;" "do all possible work with horses and rest with tractor;" "keep expenses down with prospects of lower prices in view;" "due to lower prices expected, cut operation expense everywhere possible;" "looked for cost reduction, abandoned all home and farm improvements."

A number of farmers expressed an increased interest in markets and market information. A few examples of this type follow.

"I have learned to study future conditions more;" "has prevented my making some mistakes;" "have avoided seasonal low markets rather successfully;" "have bought and sold in line with the outlook, using selling time especially with profit;" "sold corn in the fore part of the year;" "as result of outlook have been able to market crops and livestock to better advantage;" "sold wheat as soon as possible after outlook meeting;" "plan with more certainty in advance with regard to marketing;" "marketed earlier;" "have studied the past, present, and future markets and conditions more carefully;" "studied future markets more than the present and had hogs to sell at high season;" "watched crop and livestock statistics closer and tried to grow crops and livestock accordingly;" "sold my corn at once instead of borrowing money on it as I had intended."

A few farmers naturally have found little encouragement in the whole situation and have followed a policy of retrenchment, as illustrated by one reply:

"From sitting tight to tighter and from doing less to nearly nothing."

The other questions can be answered more briefly. The parts of the district outlook meeting which have been of most value to farmers were of interest. Many farmers indicated more than one part as being of value, hence the total number checked is greater than the number of replies received. "Talks" was checked by 205 of the men who replied; "charts" by 177; "printed reports" by 137; and "discussion by farmers" by 102. From these replies it was evident that the explanation of the outlook together with illustrative charts was considered of most value by those present.

Of 255 who answered the third question, 91 had helped in holding local outlook meetings and 164 had not.

The fourth question, having to do with additional training or materials which would be helpful in holding local outlook meetings, was, of course, limited to the 91 who had given assistance in such meetings. A few of the answers which are typical in this respect will indicate rather clearly the additional materials needed by farmers for such activity. These follow:

"an outline for a talk;" "charts for local use;" "elementary training on fundamental basis of charts;" "more charts printed in the outlook

report;" "a good report of points brought out in the meeting;" "how to make the average farmer understand the different cycles;" "more interpretation of economic conditions;" "more on price materials;" "market conditions under other periods of similar character;" "abstract of important parts of the outlook;" "more training in reading charts;" "micrographed outline of materials used by speakers;" "copies of talks made, since it is hard to take notes;" "material on relation of agriculture to industry;" "something to induce farmers to quit their work long enough to learn how to do what they are trying to do."

Those of us who work with economic information sometimes forget that this is a new field and one that covers a broad range, and we should hand out information in doses which are not too large. The above replies indicate the need on the part of farmers for getting this material in simple form and in amounts which can be assimilated at one time or for help given by means of an outline.

The fifth question had to do with the proportion of farmers who study future rather than present market and price conditions as a guide for production and marketing. Two hundred and eighty-eight ventured an opinion on this question; of these 121 thought that 10 per cent or less of farmers gave attention to future market conditions; 75 estimated between 11 and 25 per cent; 75 others between 26 and 50 per cent; and 17 thought that more than 50 per cent of farmers paid attention to future prospects.

Under the sixth question a number of good suggestions were received regarding the kind of information and the methods of presentation. These may be summarized as follows:

Fifteen felt that more farmers should be included in the district outlook meetings; 14 thought that more time should be given to general discussion by farmers; 10 that reports should be more specific; 7 that more discussion should be included on marketing; 7 others wished more emphasis on farm organization; and still another 7 wanted a discussion on taxation included; 5 requested more illustrative material; 3 wanted more printed matter; 2 thought that the meetings should be held earlier in the year.

The whole group of these replies makes very interesting reading. All told the replies serve to inspire confidence in the judgment of our good farmers and also confidence that our program on outlook work is having some effect. In this connection we must keep in mind that the men reached in this way were highly selected and this example does not represent a cross section. It does, however, represent the reactions of a group of leading farmers, and these men for the most part are influential in their communities. This information certainly gives us a better basis on which to plan our work for the future. From it shall evolve some plans for the improvement of the outlook work as we have carried it on in the State, and particularly plans for giving training to farm advisers and to local leaders in order that they may more intelligently understand the outlook and may in turn interpret it to better advantage to their neighbors. After all, an outlook program finds its application on the individual farms, and the right changes made there form the criterion of the success of the efforts put forth.

How Outlook Information is used and what Additional
Information is Desired by Farmers in South
Dakota *

In order to obtain information from the readers of The South Dakota Farm Outlook regarding their attitude towards the publication, what use they are making of the information contained therein and their suggestions for improvement, the following questionnaire was prepared in cooperation with the agricultural statistician, and mailed to all crop reporters. Crop reporters were chosen, since they were considered a fairly representative body and since a greater return could be expected from them, as they are in the habit of filling out schedules and questionnaires.

Outlook Questions:- We have been mailing you "The South Dakota Farm Outlook, put out by the State college extension service, and would like to get your opinion of its value and your suggestions for improvement. Kindly answer the following:

(a) Do you read the outlook? Yes: 283. No: 2. Seldom 5.

(b) Has the outlook been of value to you? Yes: 253. No: 21. Doubtful: 4.

(c) Give suggestions for making material of greater value to you. Do you want more forecasts: 168. Less forecasts: 15.

Discussion of underlying conditions affecting prices. More: 213. Less: 10.

Statistical tables - More: 94. Less: 50. Charts and graphs - More: 85. Less: 50.

Are the discussions too difficult to understand? Yes: 10 No: 228.

Should the discussions be simplified even at the expense of accuracy? No: 176. Yes: 37.

Other suggestions: _____

(d) Which topics interest you most? Number the following 1, 2, 3, etc., in accordance with your interest. Example: If the discussion on cattle is of the greatest interest to you, make it number 1.

Farm prices, 189; business condition, 173; wheat situation, 135; corn and other feed crops, 167; cattle, 202; hogs, 222; sheep and wool, 98; dairy products, 156; poultry and eggs, 165; South Dakota statistics, 139;

Other topics of interest: _____

(e) Should other economic topics be added occasionally? Such as the credit situation; change in the price level; transportation and others. Yes: 200. No: 20.

(f) Give specific instances, if you can, of when the use of the outlook information was valuable or harmful to you. _____

Name _____ Post office _____ County _____

Shifts in Production or Farm Adjustments Brought About by
Reading the South Dakota Outlook

1. Wheat.

- a. Cutting out wheat altogether.
- b. Shifting from wheat to flax as a cash crop.

2. Flax.

Increasing or decreasing flax acreage.

- (1) Some reports have been very successful.
- (2) Reports were harmful to some readers in 1930.
- (3) Time of selling as indicated by outlook made money for readers.
Sold at high time and bought seed back at 75 cents per bushel.

3. Potatoes.

- a. One man doubled acreage in 1929; made \$3,000.
- b. One man had 2,500 bushels of seed in 1929, undecided whether to sell or plant. Followed outlook and planted.

4. Sheep.

Outlook indicated 2 years ago that numbers were increasing rapidly.
One man sold entire band and is now restocking at low figures.

5. Cattle.

- a. Outlook, indicating that bottom had been reached in the numbers of cattle on farms kept a number of men from rushing into the business.
- b. Feeding operations.
During the fall of 1929 315 Montana steers were fed on the strength of the outlook and were sold the third week in February. Money was mad

6. Hogs.

- a. Outlook used for 5 years.
Very beneficial in 1925.
- b. Large increase in 1931 due to use of outlook.
One man reports an increase of 35 per cent.

Changes in time of marketing due to use of outlook.

1. Cattle.

A number reported selling earlier in 1930 than they had planned (February, March).

2. Sheep.

Looked for indications as to high point in spring. Many raised early lambs and marketed early.

3. Dairy Cattle.

Sold young stock on strength of outlook.

4. Wheat.

- a. Harmful as to time of selling in 1929.

5. Hogs. a. Harmful as to time of selling.

- b. Had heavy weights instead of light as outlook indicated.

How Outlook Information Is Used by Farmers in Ohio

By
C. R. Arnold
Extension Economist

Farmers must and will make their own decisions. We may give them advice, or we may tell them what to do, but the final decision of the farmer regarding what he shall do is made by himself, out on his farm. Since this is true, extension workers are becoming more convinced that the greatest help to farmers does not necessarily come from giving them advice on what to do, but from giving a better understanding of the factors affecting the situation. This better understanding assists the farmer more in making his own decisions than pure advice on what to do, given by someone possibly not familiar with the farmer's entire farm program would.

During the last seven years, more than 1,000 "economic situation" meetings have been held by economic specialists. These meetings have been designed to give farmers a better background of information, so that they could interpret at all times current economic information in terms of their own farm business. During the last four years a monthly publication, *Timely Economic Information for Ohio Farmers*, has been published. This publication is sent to a mailing list built upon requests now numbering about 6,200.

A farmer in Auglaize County, Ohio says, "Last spring I lost my copy of the monthly economic leaflet which had the planting intentions report, so I went to the county agricultural agent's office to get another copy. We talked it over in his office and I decided to make the increase in potato acreage which I had planned. Another farmer talked with the county agent and studied the potato "facts" leaflet as well as the current leaflet, and as a result, decided to sell his potatoes in the fall of 1930 rather than to hold them. This farmer later said, "I'm sure glad I did."

After reading the cattle-feeding Outlook report last fall a livestock man came into the county agent's office to discuss it further. This man later decided to feed plain cattle instead of choice. The report and the information furnished by the agent had simply assisted the man in making his own decisions.

On a potato tour in one Ohio county the county agent reports that a number of men were discussing possible potato prices and he noticed that one of them was pointing out the crop-estimate figures and explaining them to the other men.

A farmer increased the number of sows farrowing early last spring from 6 to 12 the county agent reports. This farmer had wheat to feed and said that he expected hog prices to hold up fairly well this summer and he could feed the pigs out on wheat and get them to market before the heavy run this fall.

A Butler County farmer said that the hatchery reports last spring indicated to him that he should raise a few more chicks than usual, and he did.

A tenant in southwestern Ohio who was feeding part of the landlord's share of the corn crop, talked to the landlord about the price of corn, but they both decided to wait for the September crop-report figures, given in the monthly economic leaflet before deciding.

D. T. Herrman, county agricultural agent in Butler County, Ohio, reports that many farmers discuss the current economic information with him, especially the pig-survey reports and the intentions-to-plant figures. He says that several men told him during the spring and summer of 1930, that they expected to crowd their pigs onto the August or September market, as these men expected hog prices to go quite low before Christmas.

In discussing the wheat situation with an individual, the county agricultural agent was surprised to know that this farmer had read the discussion of the Russian wheat situation in the National City Bank Bulletin.

One farmer in Mahoning County was convinced by the analysis of his farm record in 1929 that there was no place in his organization for the sheep which he kept. The next question was, when was the best time to get rid of them. He studied the sheep-outlook figures as best he could, and then sold the sheep immediately.

A cattle feeder in Wood County who had always fed heavy cattle, told the county agricultural agent a year ago last fall that after the cattle-situation meeting in their county and after studying the leaflet he received, he decided there was less risk in feeding lighter cattle. The next spring a tour stopped at his place, and he told this story to the group. He also said, "If I had fed heavy cattle as I usually do, I'd have lost all my feed and got nothing for my labor."

One farmer in Darke County said he sold his hogs at a certain time because his neighbor did. He said "Mr. Myers keeps posted on the hog outlook all the time." Another farmer realized from an analysis of his farm record, that he should reduce his number of cows in order to make the best organization of his own particular farm. He then studied the outlook information to determine whether to make this adjustment at once or gradually.

One farmer said it looked to him as if feed would be very cheap this winter, and even though hog prices may get low, he still looks for a demand for brood sows next spring. He said, "I'm going to breed about a dozen extra gilts this fall to sell at about the time they farrow in February. I can do this with practically no extra expense, and I believe I'll get 8 or 10 cents a pound for them."

The county agricultural agent was asked by a farmer last fall to get him "dope" from the other States on the size of the soybean seed crop. He said that as a result of these figures he sold early and netted 25 cents per bushel more than if he had held his bean crop.

One Meigs County farmer stated that the prospective production of early, second early, and late potatoes each summer helped him to decide whether to dig early and sell, or to wait longer, obtain a larger yield, and market in competition with the late crop.

